

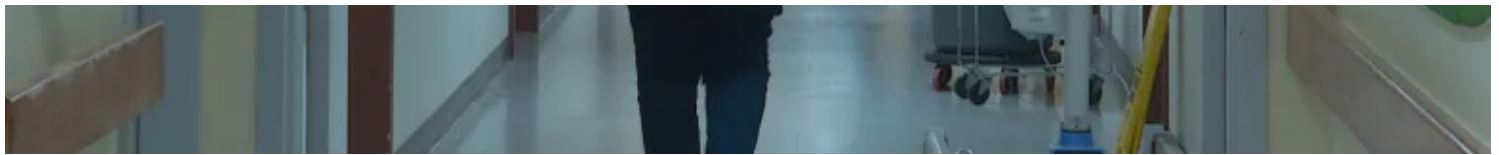
PEI

Easing restrictions in long-term care appreciated by residents, families

'It's enriched the residents' lives'

[Travis Kingdon](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 13, 2020 6:21 PM AT | Last Updated: November 13, 2020





The hallways at Garden Home in Charlottetown are busy again as residents can once again welcome visitors. It's the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-March there has been this level of freedom in the province's care homes. (Travis Kingdon/CBC)

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For the first time in months, life is looking more normal at Garden Home, a community and nursing care facility in Charlottetown. Some activities have been reinstated, and staff and residents are roaming the hallways much as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic began.

There have been several changes made to the visitation rules in Prince Edward Island long-term care facilities that allow residents and their families more freedom.

The tents for outdoor visits are gone. Now, instead of scheduling a specific time to visit with residents, anyone can visit them inside the home and in their rooms during normal visiting hours.

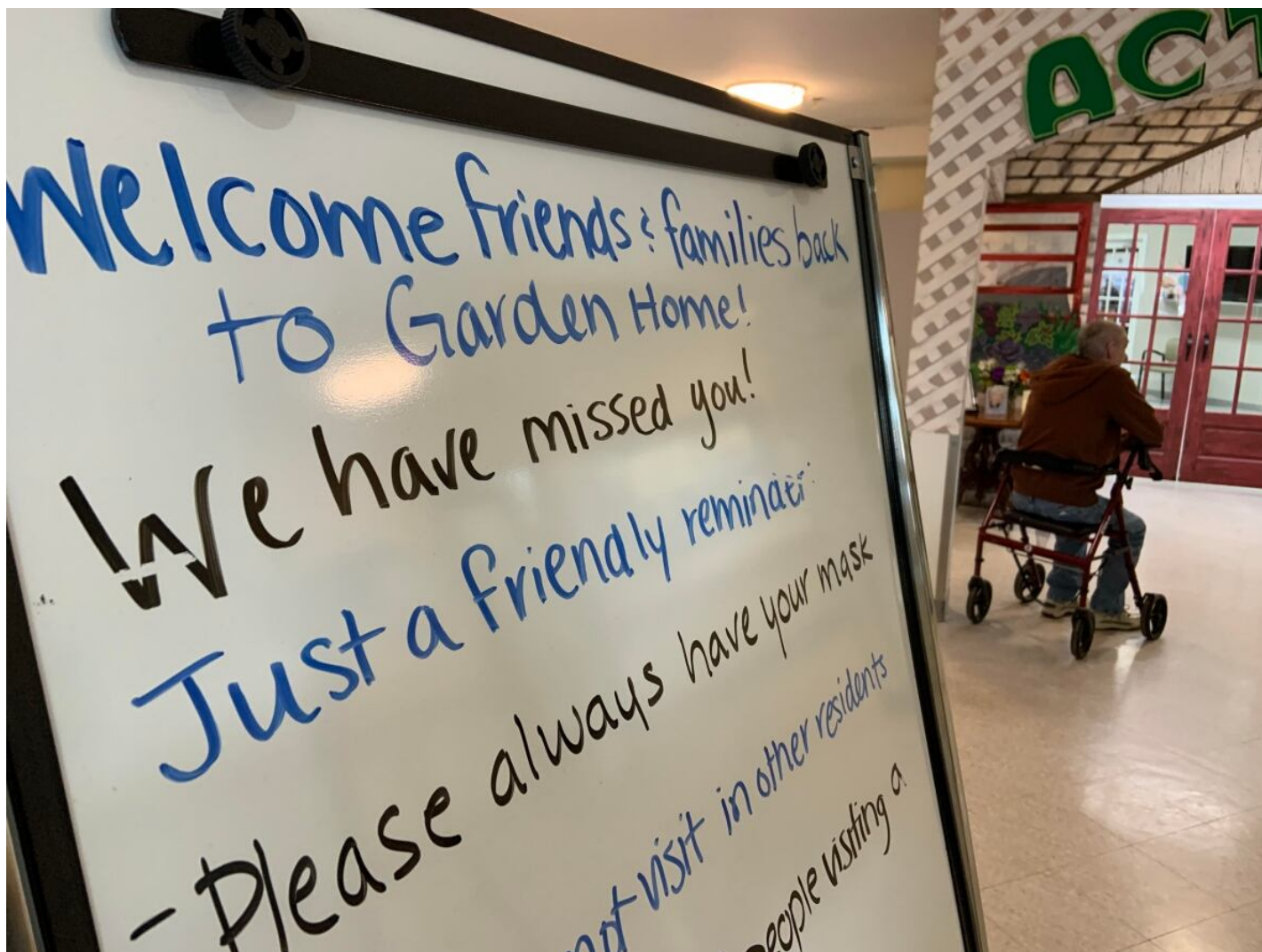
There are no longer any restrictions on how many different people can visit a resident, though only three people can visit at a time at P.E.I. Seniors Homes premises.

"We've come a long way. We've never seen this level of openness to visitation since prior to the 13th of March," said Jason Lee, CEO of P.E.I. Seniors Homes, which owns Garden Home, Whisperwood Villa and Lady Slipper Villa.

At those homes, staff screen visitors at the door, taking their temperature and having them answer a series of questions. Inside, visitors must wear masks and are permitted to get close to their loved ones, but must maintain physical distance from other residents.

'Enriched the residents' lives'

The province also recently expanded the partner-in-care program. Residents can have up to three partners-in-care, who are close contacts who can help with things like meals and mobility.



A sign welcomes back families and visitors inside Garden Home, and reminds them of the rules. (Travis Kingdon/CBC)

"We have over 100 people coming into this building every day as visitors and partners-in-care, and that's something we didn't see two or three months ago," Lee said.

“Until there's a vaccine ... this is going to be the most freedom and the least amount of restrictions that we can expect.”

— Jason Lee

Those partners-in-care are also able to sign their loved ones out of the home, and take them for drives or overnight visits. Those are subject to strict rules — no restaurants, salons, shopping or other public places — and the driver must wear a mask in the vehicle.

Those changes have been in effect for several weeks, and Lee said there's been a positive change in the mood at Garden Home.

'We've come a long way, we've never seen this level of openness to visitation prior to the 13th of March,' said Jason Lee, CEO of P.E.I. Seniors Homes. (Travis Kingdon/CBC)

"The residents really appreciate it," said Lee, with many taking the opportunity to visit family homesteads or cottages.

"Those big families, now everybody can come in and spend time and visit. And it's really, you know, it's enriched the residents' lives and helped to fight some of the things that, you know, the loneliness and isolation that we struggled with for so many months," he said.

Lee said he thinks the changes have struck the right balance of safety and access for long-term care homes in the province.

"We're basically being told the same from the Chief Public Health Office — that until there's a vaccine, until we really see a light at the end of this tunnel, this is going to be the most freedom and the least amount of restrictions that we can expect."

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'It was pretty hard'

When the pandemic first hit and visitors weren't allowed at all, Phyllis Boudreau wasn't able to visit her husband living in the Garden Home.

"It was pretty hard. You know, I would call him every day around the same time, around 10 o'clock in the morning, and tell him — he always wanted to know what I did the day before. So he was quite interested in what was going on outside of here," she said.

Phyllis Boudreau's husband is a resident at Garden Home and she says having more visitors has improved his outlook. (Travis Kingdon/CBC)

Now that she and her children and grandchildren are all able to go into the home and visit, Boudreau said her husband's mood has greatly improved.

"[He's] a lot more happy, you know, and more like involved in ... the media, and TV, and what's going on," she said.

While Boudreau appreciates her ability to visit in-person, in-home with her husband, she said she is thinking about Christmas. Currently, the home allows only three people to visit at one time, so the entire family can't gather for Christmas.

"I really would like [the limit] to increase, maybe just for the week of Christmas, so we could visit all together," she said.

But in a year where she didn't expect to even be able to have a Christmas dinner with her family, Boudreau said she's thankful for the ability to visit in person through the holidays.

"It is really great to be able to come, and come all together, and visit together," she said.

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